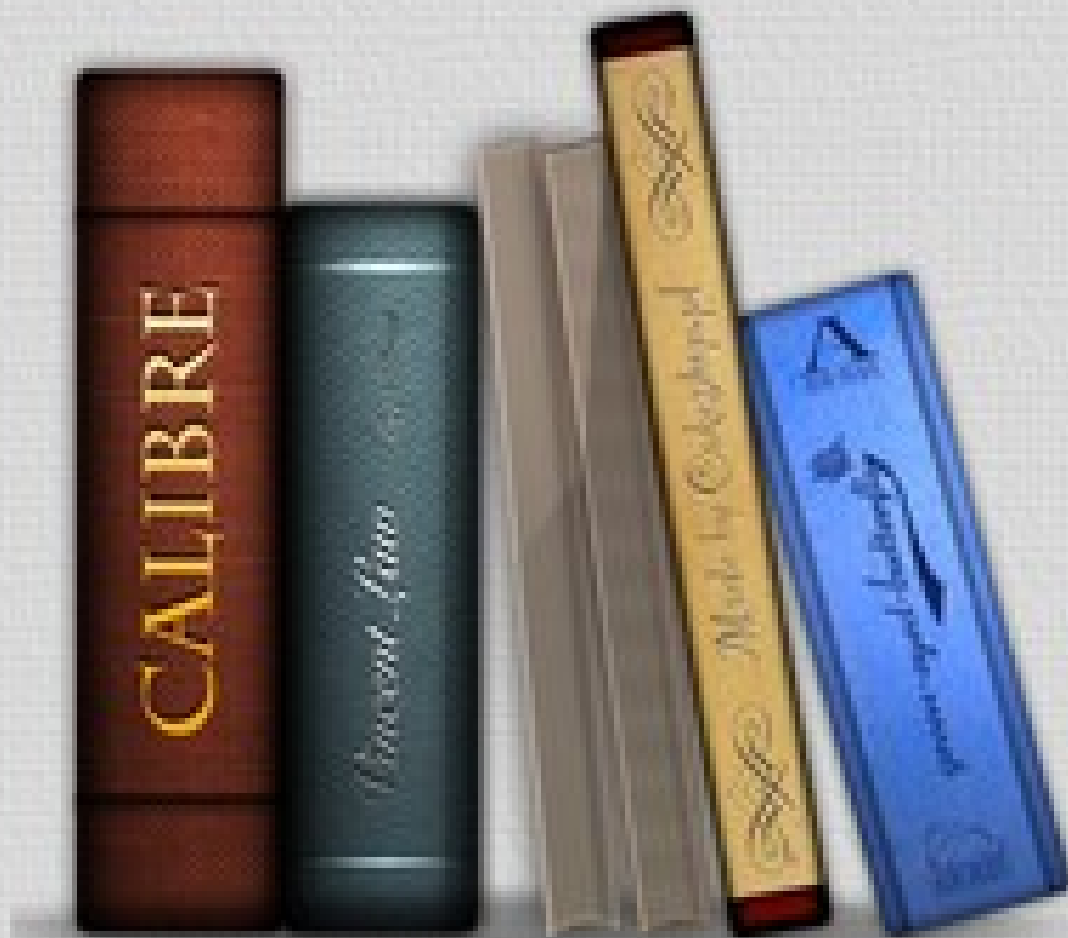


DGuzik 35 Habakkuk

David Guzik

Book 35 of Bible Commentary:
David Guzik



calibre 1.20.0

(Hab 1:1)

Habakkuk Complains to the Lord

The following is the message¹ which God revealed to Habakkuk the prophet:²

(Guzik)

Hab 1:1-2:1

HABAKKUK 1 - THE PROPHET'S PROBLEM

A. The first problem: "How long, O Lord?"

1. (Hab_1:1) Habakkuk and his burden.

The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.

a. **The prophet Habakkuk:** We don't know much about the **prophet Habakkuk** from any other book in the Bible.

Since he prophesied the coming Babylonian army and its destruction of Judah, he prophesied some time before that invasion. Many think that Habakkuk ministered sometime during the reign of King Johoiakim, perhaps around the year 607 B.C.

i. It's hard to say with certainty when Habakkuk prophesied. Since he speaks of God *raising up* the Babylonians (Hab_1:6), we can guess that he wrote in the 25-year period between the time when Babylon conquered Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire (612 B.C.) and the time when Babylon conquered Jerusalem (587 B.C.).

ii. We don't know how old Habakkuk was when he gave this prophecy, but it is likely that he lived during the time of godly king Josiah (640 to 609 B.C.) and then gave this prophecy during the reign of one of Josiah's successors.

Habakkuk knew what it was like to live during a time of revival, and then to see God's people and the nation slip into lethargy and sin. "Habakkuk had a problem. He had

lived through a period of national revival followed by a period of spiritual decline.” (Boice)

b. **The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw:** Habakkuk had a **burden** - not only in the sense of a message from God, but also in the sense of a heavy weight. It was heavy in its *content*, because Habakkuk announced coming judgment on Judah. It was also heavy in its *source*, because Habakkuk deals with tough questions he brings to God and God’s answer to those questions.

i. The name **Habakkuk** is derived from the Hebrew verb “embrace.” His name probably means, “He Who Embraces” or “He Who Clings.” It is an appropriate name for both the prophet and the book, because Habakkuk comes to a firm faith through grappling with tough questions.

ii. **The prophet:** “This title is rare in book headings (see Hag_1:1; Zec_1:1), and is taken by some to indicate that Habakkuk was a professional prophet, one who earned his living serving as a prophet at the Temple or court, unlike Amos (cf. Amo_7:14).” (Baker)

2. (Hab_1:2-4) Habakkuk asks God why He seems to delay judgment.

O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” and You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; there is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

a. **Even cry out to You, “Violence” and You will not save:** Habakkuk looked at the **violence** and injustice around him in the nation of Judah. He wondered where God was, and why God did not set things right.

b. **Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?** This is an excellent question. Why does God allow us to see iniquity and trouble, in our self or in others?

i. Why God allows us to see iniquity in our self.

- To keep us humble
- To make us submissive in the hour of trouble
- To make us value salvation all the more

ii. Why God allows us to see iniquity in others.

- To show us what we might have been ourselves
- To make us see the wickedness of sin, that we might pass by it and hate it, and not indulge in it ourselves
- To make us admire the grace of God when He saves sinners
- To set us more earnestly to work that God can use us to save others and extend God's kingdom. "Ah, my brethren, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation; for if there be anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other matter, it is in the matter of earnestness." (Spurgeon)

c. Iniquity . . . trouble . . . plundering and violence . . . strife . . . contention . . . the law is powerless . . .

justice never goes forth . . . perverse judgment proceeds: Habakkuk sees trouble and sin everywhere, from personal relationships to courts of law. This distresses him so much that he cries out to God and asks God why He doesn't set things straight.

i. Habakkuk deals with the questions that come up when someone really believes God, yet looks around them and the world doesn't seem to match up with how God wants it. Habakkuk sees it - especially remembering the prior times of revival under King Josiah - and asks, "Lord, why are you allowing this?"

ii. "This prophecy deals with the problems created by faith; and with the Divine answers to the questions which express those problems." (Morgan)

B. God's answer to the first problem.

1. (Hab_1:5-6) God's astounding work: bringing the Babylonians to judge Judah.

"Look among the nations and watch; be utterly astounded! For *I will* work a work in your days *which* you would not believe, though it were told *you*. For indeed I am raising up

the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs.”

a. **Be utterly astounded:** God tells the troubled prophet, “Don’t worry about it. Look at the surrounding nations and from them will come a nation that will be My instrument of judgment on sinful Judah.”

b. **I will work a work in your days which you would not believe:** We understand the idea of something “too good to be true,” but that isn’t what God is talking about here. This is something “too bad to be true,” a work of judgment so astounding that Habakkuk would have a hard time believing it.

c. **I am raising up the Chaldeans:** When the Babylonians (**the Chaldeans**) eventually came against Judah, they came as sent by the LORD. It wasn’t that they themselves did not want to come, but God allowed their sinful desire to conquer Judah to come to fruition. If God had not allowed them to do it, they never could have conquered Judah and exiled God’s people out of the Promised Land.

2. (Hab_1:7-11) The strength and speed of the Babylonian army.

“They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; their cavalry comes from afar; they fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat. They all come for violence; their faces are set *like* the east wind. They gather captives like sand. They scoff at kings, and princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, for they heap up earthen *mounds* and seize it. Then *his* mind changes, and he transgresses; he commits offense, *ascribing* this power to his god.”

a. **They are terrible and dreadful:** Habakkuk wondered where God’s judgment was against sinful Judah. The LORD

lets him know that the judgment will indeed come, and when it comes through the Babylonians it will be **terrible and dreadful**.

b. He commits offense, ascribing this power to his god: When the Babylonians overwhelm the land of Judah, they will wrongly give the credit to their false gods. The LORD they would do this before it ever happened.

C. The second problem: "Why do it this way, O LORD?"

1. (Hab_1:12-17) Habakkuk wonders why God would use a nation more wicked than Judah to bring judgment on Judah. Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. *You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, *and* hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a *person* more righteous than he? *Why* do You make men like fish of the sea, like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them? They take up all of them with a hook, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their dragnet. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their dragnet; because by them their share *is* sumptuous and their food plentiful. Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity?

a. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously: Habakkuk was first troubled that there was no judgment against Judah; God answered by telling him judgment was on the way. Now Habakkuk is troubled by the agent of judgment, the Babylonians - who were an even more wicked people than the people of Judah.

i. It would be like crying out to God about the state of the church in America, and hearing God respond by saying, "I'll fix the problem by a Communist invasion of America." We would say, "Wait a minute LORD - the problem is bad, but your cure is worse than the disease!"

ii. Some people face crisis times like this all the wrong way. They withdraw from the church and from fellowship and they pull back into a little spiritual corner. Others give up on God altogether. Lloyd-Jones guides us to a better response: ·

Stop to think - before talking about it, think about it ·

Restate basic principles - As you think about the problem, don't begin with the problem. Go back further to basic principles about God and His dealing with man

·
Apply the principles to the problem - now, think about your problem in light of these basic principles ·

Commit the matter to God in faith - whether you know what to do or not b. **You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness:** This is even more problematic to Habakkuk because he knows the character of God. Since he understands the holy character of God, he is more troubled than ever as to why God would judge wicked Judah by exalting even more wicked Babylon.

c. **Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity?** Habakkuk wonders how long God will allow the Babylonians to continue their cruel conquest of nations. It is as if God's people are conquered as easily as fish in a net.

i. "Easily we are taken and destroyed. We have no *leader* to guide us, and no *power* to defend ourselves.

Nebuchadnezzar is here represented as a fisherman, who is constantly casting nets into the sea, and enclosing multitudes of fishes; and being always successful, he sacrifices to his own net." (Clarke) 2. (Hab_2:1) Habakkuk resolutely waits for God's reply.

I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected.

a. **And watch to see what He will say to me:** Habakkuk has raised two important questions to God, yet he asks both with a great attitude. He anticipates an answer from God and is willing to **watch** - that is, *wait* for it. Often when we question God we don't expect Him to answer, but Habakkuk does. Other times we not only *expect* God will answer, but we *demand* that He answer, and answer according to our schedule. Habakkuk approaches this with the right attitude.

i. "How often God's answers come, and find us gone! We have waited for a while, and, thinking there was no answer, we have gone our way but as we have turned the first corner the post as come in. God's ships touch at our wharves; but there is no one to unload them . . . It is not enough to direct your prayer unto God; look up, and look out, until the blessing alights on your head." (Meyer)

b. **And what I will answer when I am corrected:** Habakkuk's attitude is also right because he *expects* God to correct him. From this we see that Habakkuk didn't ask God this question because he thought God was wrong and had to explain Himself. He asked it because he knew that he was wrong and needed to be corrected. His questions were his invitation to God saying, "God, I don't understand what you are doing, but I know that you are right in all things. Please speak to me and correct me."

(Hab 1:2) How long, LORD, must I cry for help?

But you do not listen!

I call out to you, "Violence!"

But you do not intervene!³

(Hab 1:3) Why do you force me to witness injustice?⁴

Why do you put up with wrongdoing?⁵

Destruction and violence confront⁶ me;

conflict is present and one must endure strife.⁷
(Hab 1:4) For this reason the law lacks power,⁸

and justice is never carried out.⁹

Indeed,¹⁰ the wicked intimidate¹¹ the innocent.¹²

For this reason justice is perverted.¹³
(Hab 1:5) ***The Lord Reveals Some Startling News***

"Look at the nations and pay attention!¹⁴

You will be shocked and amazed!¹⁵

For I will do something in your lifetime¹⁶

that you will not believe even though you are forewarned.¹⁷
(Hab 1:6) Look, I am about to empower¹⁸ the Babylonians,

that ruthless¹⁹ and greedy²⁰ nation.

They sweep across the surface²¹ of the earth,

seizing dwelling places that do not belong to them.
(Hab 1:7) They are frightening and terrifying;

they decide for themselves what is right.²²
(Hab 1:8) Their horses are faster than leopards

and more alert²³ than wolves in the desert.²⁴

Their horses²⁵ gallop,²⁶

their horses come a great distance;

like a vulture²⁷ they swoop down quickly to devour their prey.²⁸

(Hab 1:9) All of them intend²⁹ to do violence;

every face is determined.³⁰

They take prisoners as easily as one scoops up sand.³¹

(Hab 1:10) They mock kings

and laugh at rulers.

They laugh at every fortified city;

they build siege ramps³² and capture them.

(Hab 1:11) They sweep by like the wind and pass on.³³

But the one who considers himself a god will be held guilty."³⁴

(Hab 1:12) ***Habakkuk Voices Some Concerns***

LORD, you have been active from ancient times;³⁵

my sovereign God,³⁶ you are immortal.³⁷

LORD, you have made them³⁸ your instrument of judgment.³⁹

Protector,⁴⁰ you have appointed them as your instrument of punishment.⁴¹

(Hab 1:13) You are too just⁴² to tolerate⁴³ evil;

you are unable to condone⁴⁴ wrongdoing.

So why do you put up with such treacherous people?⁴⁵

Why do you say nothing when the wicked devour⁴⁶ those more righteous than they are?⁴⁷

(Hab 1:14) You made people like fish in the sea,

like animals in the sea⁴⁸ that have no ruler.

(Hab 1:15) The Babylonian tyrant⁴⁹ pulls them all up with a fishhook;

he hauls them in with his throw net.⁵⁰

When he catches⁵¹ them in his dragnet,

he is very happy.⁵²

(Hab 1:16) Because of his success⁵³ he offers sacrifices to his throw net

and burns incense to his dragnet;⁵⁴

for because of them he has plenty of food,⁵⁵

and more than enough to eat.⁵⁶

(Hab 1:17) Will he then⁵⁷ continue to fill and empty his throw net?⁵⁸

Will he always⁵⁹ destroy⁶⁰ nations and spare none?⁶¹
(Hab 2:1) I will stand at my watch post;

I will remain stationed on the city wall.¹

I will keep watching, so I can see what he says to me

and can know² how I should answer

when he counters my argument.³

(Hab 2:2) ***The Lord Assures Habakkuk***

The LORD responded:⁴

"Write down this message!⁵ Record it legibly on tablets,

so the one who announces⁶ it may read it easily.⁷

(Guzik)

Hab 2:2-20

HABAKKUK 2 - GOD JUSTIFIES HIS JUDGMENT

A. The proud rebuked.

1. (Hab_2:2-3) Preparation for the answer: how to publish the vision.

Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision and make *it* plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

a. **Write the vision and make it plain:** God told Habakkuk to record this "question and answer" time for the benefit of others - **that he may run who reads it**. Habakkuk's revelation wasn't just for himself, but also to edify others. Those who read it would make rapid progress (**may run**), but they couldn't make this progress if Habakkuk did not **make it plain**.

- i. Habakkuk first had to *see the vision*. The preacher cannot make anyone else see what he does not see for himself.
- ii. Habakkuk then had to *make it known*. The preacher must do what he can to make the word of God known, and make it known in as many ways as possible.
- iii. Habakkuk had to make it known as *permanently as possible* - he was told to **write the vision**. The preacher must do what he can to make a permanent impact on his listeners.
- iv. Habakkuk had to *make it plain*. "I have sometimes thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their duty to make the message elaborate, to go to the very bottom of the subject, and stir up all the mud they could find there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way at all . . . They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible, - which difficulties most of their hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them." (Spurgeon)
- v. Habakkuk had to *make it practical* - **that he may run who reads it**. It doesn't say, "that he who runs may read it," but "**that he may run who reads it**." The *running* - the activity and progress - comes forth from God's word.
- b. **For the vision is yet for an appointed time:** Habakkuk spoke to an age beyond his own. The Babylonian conquest would not be evident in his own day, but in the future.

2. (Hab_2:4-8) God knows how to deal with the proud.

"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, *he is* a proud man, and he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, and he *is* like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples. Will not all these take up a proverb against him, and a taunting riddle against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases *what* is not his; how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'?"

Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you, because of men's blood and the violence of the land *and* the city, and of all who dwell in it."

a. **Behold the proud:** Habakkuk wondered why Babylon - a nation even more sinful than Judah - would be used to bring judgment to Judah. In answering the prophet, God first assures him that He sees **the proud**, and knows that **his soul is not upright in him**.

i. Pride is everywhere and takes all manner of shapes.

- Here is the rich man, proud of what he has
- There is the poor man, proud of his "honor" in having less
- Here is the talented man, proud of what he can do
- There is the man of few talents, proud of his hard work
- Here is the religious man, proud of his religion
- There is the unbeliever, proud of his unbelief
- Here is the establishment man, proud of his place in society
- There is the counter-cultural man, proud of his "outcast" status
- Here is the learned man, proud of his intelligence and learning
- Here is the simple man, proud of his simplicity

ii. "If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?" (Spurgeon)

iii. Pride can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to John Bunyan after a sermon and

told him what a fine sermon he preached. "You're too late," Bunyan answered. "The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit." Satan can tell the praying brother to be proud of his ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

iv. *"Wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God. Why! pride is even hateful to men. Men cannot bear a proud man; and hence it is that a proud man, who has any sense left, often sees that it is so, and he therefore tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble, when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot bear pride; it is a part of his daily business to put down the proud."* (Spurgeon) b. **But the just shall live by his faith:** In contrast to **the proud**, there are **the just**. The principle of their life is **faith**, instead of pride that looks to self. True **faith** looks outside of self unto the LORD God, while pride always looks to self.

i. This brief statement from the prophet Habakkuk is one of the most important, and most quoted Old Testament statements in the New Testament. Paul used it to show that the **just** live **by faith**, not by law. Being under the law isn't the way to be found **just** before God, only living by faith is.

ii. If you are declared **just** - that is, *approved* - before God, you have done it by a relationship of **faith**. If your life is all about living under the law, then God does not find you approved.

iii. In Hebrew, the important part of the verse has only three words: "the justified man," "by his faith," and "will live." Every word in Hab_2:4 is important, and the Lord quotes it three times in the New Testament just to bring out the fullness of the meaning

Rom_1:17 is the commentary on *the justified man* - "The **just** shall live by faith"

.

Heb_10:38 is the commentary on *faith* - "The just shall live by **faith**"

.

Gal_3:11 is the commentary on the Christian *life* - "The just shall **live** by faith"

iv. Before his bold declaration of the truth of the gospel, Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk. As a monk he went on a pilgrimage to Rome and as he crossed the Alps he fell deathly ill. As he lay sick he felt great turmoil, both physical and spiritual, and a verse that had previously touched him came to mind: *The just will live by his faith*, from Hab_2:4. When Luther recovered he went on to Rome and did the tourist things that all the pilgrims did. One day he came to the church of Saint John's Lateran, where there is a staircase said to be from Pilate's judgment hall.

It was the custom of pilgrims to climb this staircase, but never on their feet - they painfully climbed a step at a time on their knees, saying prayers and kissing the steps where it was thought the blood of Jesus fell. Luther came to this place and started doing just as all the pilgrims, because the pope promised an indulgence to all who climbed the steps on their knees and said the prayers. As he did this, Luther remembered the words from Habakkuk: *The just will live by his faith*. It is said that when he remembered this he stopped, stood up, walked down and went straight home to Germany. Some say the Reformation began on those stairs.

v. "Before those words broke upon my mind I hated God and was angry with him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further

increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood those words - 'The just shall live by faith!' 'The just shall live by faith!' -

then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God." (Luther, cited in Boice)

vi. We are called to live by faith, and nothing else.

- Some Christians live by devotions
- Some Christians live by works
- Some Christians live by feelings
- Some Christians live by circumstances

Each of these is meaningless and perhaps *dangerous* without faith.

c. **He enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied:** God sees the proud man and how the proud man **cannot be satisfied**. The one who is declared just by faith is satisfied, but the proud man keeps grasping.

d. **Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you:** Here, God assures Habakkuk that He knows how to deal with nations like Babylon. He promises the Babylonians that just as they **plundered many nations**, so one day others would **plunder** them. The Babylonians were perfect examples of the proud who set themselves against those who are declared just by faith - and Habakkuk could take comfort in the fact that God would deal with them.

i. "The immediate value of the word was the Habakkuk learned that God's employment of the Chaldeans did not mean the permanent power of this evil people." (Morgan)

B. Four woes to silence sinful man.

1. (Hab_2:9-11) Woe to the greedy.

"Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster! You give shameful counsel to your house, cutting off many peoples, and sin *against* your soul. For the

stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the timbers will answer it.”

a. **Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house:** God addresses the greedy man, and tells him that he is ripe for judgment. The greedy man does his best to protect himself (**set his next on high**), yet all his best will come to nothing.

b. **You . . . sin against your own soul:** The greedy man thinks in terms of nothing but gain, but ends of losing his own soul. Jesus’ parable in Luk_12:16-21 is the perfect example of the greedy man who sins against his **own soul**.

c. **For the stone will cry out from the wall:** Habakkuk pictures a beautiful house built by a greedy man, and the very stones of the house **cry out** from the wall against the man’s greed.

2. (Hab_2:12-14) Woe to the violent.

“Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity! Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts that the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

a. **Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed:** The LORD is not only displeased with the greedy, He also pronounces a woe against the *violent*.

b. **The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD:** The violent man thinks that *his* might makes right, so he feels free to abuse others for his gain. As a correction and a rebuke, the LORD reminds the violent man of *His* ultimate triumph.

3. (15-17) Woe to the drunk.

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing *him to* your bottle, even to make *him* drunk, that you may look on his nakedness! You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also; drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the Lord’s right hand *will be* turned against you, and utter

shame will be on your glory. For the violence *done to* Lebanon will cover you, and the plunder of beasts *which* made them afraid, because of men's blood and the violence of the land *and* the city, and of all who dwell in it.

a. **Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor . . . You also; drink!** Through the prophet Habakkuk, the LORD rebukes both the drunk and those who promote drunkenness. Though they think that alcohol makes them feel good, God rightly says they are **filled with shame instead of glory**.

i. In Eph_5:18 Paul calls drunkenness *dissipation*; drunkenness is a *waste* of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. John Trapp writes of drinking "all the three outs" - "that is, ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head." (Trapp's commentary on Gal_5:21) ii. The damage of drunkenness goes beyond the act itself and into what it effects in lives and families. Yearly in the United States alcohol is responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

b. **The cup of the Lord's right hand will be turned against you:** The drunk and those who promote drunkenness loved their own cup full of drink; now God promises a **cup** for them, a cup of judgment and just recompense for their sin.

4. (Hab_2:18-20) Woe to the idolater.

"What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it, the molded image, a teacher of lies, that the maker of its mold should trust in it, to make mute idols? Woe to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone, 'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, yet in it there is no breath at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

a. **Woe to him who says to wood, "Awake!"** : Having dealt with the greedy man, the violent man, and the drunk

now God speaks to the idolater - who treats inanimate objects as if they had life and intelligence.

b. In it there is no breath at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple: In contrast to lifeless idols, the LORD is alive and well **in His holy temple**. The folly of the idolater will be exposed by the majesty of the living God.

i. Through it all, the point is proven. Habakkuk couldn't understand why God would judge a sinful nation (Judah) by an even *more* sinful nation (Babylon). Yet God reminds Habakkuk of His own wisdom and strength, and of His ultimate triumph over the wicked. God knew that Babylon was filled with the proud, the greedy, the violent, the drunk, and the idolater - and the LORD knew how to deal with them all.

(Hab 2:3) For the message is a witness to what is decreed;⁸

it gives reliable testimony about how matters will turn out.⁹

Even if the message¹⁰ is not fulfilled right away, wait patiently;¹¹

for it will certainly come to pass — it will not arrive late.

(Hab 2:4) Look, the one whose desires are not upright will faint from exhaustion,¹²

but the person of integrity¹³ will live¹⁴ because of his faithfulness.¹⁵

(Hab 2:5) Indeed, wine will betray the proud, restless man!¹⁶

His appetite¹⁷ is as big as Sheol's;¹⁸

like death, he is never satisfied.

He gathers¹⁹ all the nations;

he seizes²⁰ all peoples.

(Hab 2:6) ***The Proud Babylonians are as Good as Dead***

"But all these nations will someday taunt him²¹

and ridicule him with proverbial sayings:²²

'The one who accumulates what does not belong to him is as good as dead²³

(How long will this go on?)"²⁴ —

he who gets rich by extortion!"²⁵

(Hab 2:7) Your creditors will suddenly attack;²⁶

those who terrify you will spring into action,²⁷

and they will rob you.²⁸

(Hab 2:8) Because you robbed many countries,²⁹

all who are left among the nations³⁰ will rob you.

You have shed human blood

and committed violent acts against lands, cities,³¹ and those who live in them.

(Hab 2:9) The one who builds his house by unjust gain is as good as dead.³²

He does this so he can build his nest way up high

and escape the clutches of disaster.³³

(Hab 2:10) Your schemes will bring shame to your house.

Because you destroyed many nations, you will self-destruct.³⁴

(Hab 2:11) For the stones in the walls will cry out,

and the wooden rafters will answer back.³⁵

(Hab 2:12) The one who builds a city by bloodshed is as good as dead³⁶ —

he who starts³⁷ a town by unjust deeds.

(Hab 2:13) Be sure of this! The LORD who commands armies has decreed:

The nations' efforts will go up in smoke;

their exhausting work will be for nothing.³⁸

(Hab 2:14) For recognition of the LORD's sovereign majesty will fill the earth

just as the waters fill up the sea.³⁹

(Hab 2:15) "You who force your neighbor to drink wine⁴⁰ are as good as dead⁴¹ —

you who make others intoxicated by forcing them to drink from the bowl of your furious anger,⁴²

so you can look at their genitals.⁴³

(Hab 2:16) But you will become drunk⁴⁴ with shame, not majesty.⁴⁵

Now it is your turn to drink and expose your uncircumcised foreskin!⁴⁶

The cup of wine in the LORD's right hand⁴⁷ is coming to you,

and disgrace will replace your majestic glory!
(Hab 2:17) For you will pay in full for your violent acts against Lebanon;⁴⁸

terrifying judgment will come upon you because of the way you destroyed the wild animals living there.⁴⁹

You have shed human blood

and committed violent acts against lands, cities, and those who live in them.
(Hab 2:18) What good⁵⁰ is an idol? Why would a craftsman make it?⁵¹

What good is a metal image that gives misleading oracles?
⁵²

Why would its creator place his trust in it⁵³

and make⁵⁴ such mute, worthless things?
(Hab 2:19) The one who says to wood, 'Wake up!' is as good as dead⁵⁵ —

he who says⁵⁶ to speechless stone, 'Awake!'

Can it give reliable guidance?⁵⁷

It is overlaid with gold and silver;

it has no life's breath inside it.

(Hab 2:20) But the LORD is in his majestic palace.⁵⁸

The whole earth is speechless in his presence!"⁵⁹

(Hab 3:1) ***Habakkuk's Vision of the Divine Warrior***

This is a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet:¹

(Guzik)

Hab 3:1

HABAKKUK 3 - THE PROPHET'S PRAYER

A. Seeking revival from the God of all power.

1. (Hab_3:1-2) A plea for revival.

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard your speech *and* was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make *it* known; in wrath remember mercy.

a. **A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet:** The first two chapters of Habakkuk give us the prophet's "question and answer" time with God. Now that God has answered Habakkuk, the prophet brings a prayer to close the book.

b. **O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years:** Habakkuk simply prays for *revival*. He knows how God once worked and how His people once responded, and Habakkuk wants to see that again.

i. The prayer of Habakkuk shows us that revival is a work of God, not the achievement of man. There is something man can and must do for revival - simply cry out to God and plead for His reviving work.

ii. Notice the prayer: **revive Your work**. Often, my prayer is really "revive *my* work," but I must have a heart and mind for God's work, far bigger than my portion of it. "Shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with party, and now pray, 'Lord, revive thy work, and if thy work happen to be more in one branch of the church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do let thine own purposes be accomplished,

and thine own glory come of it, and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown.'" (Spurgeon)

iii. At the same time, this must be a *personal* prayer: "LORD, revive *me*." We too often blame the church for sin, corruption, laziness, prayerlessness, lack of spiritual power, or whatever - and we forget that *we are the church*.

Pray for personal revival and diligently search yourself:

- Check your conduct - does your walk glorify the LORD as it should? How about your *private* conduct, which only the LORD sees?

- Check your conversation - is your speech profane or impure? Do you talk about Jesus with others?

- Check your communion - are you living a growing, abiding life with Jesus?

c. **In the midst of the years make it known:** Habakkuk longs for God to do a work that is *evident* to everyone as a work of God. He prays that revival would be **known** at a definite *time and place (in the midst of the years)*, not just as an idea in someone's head.

d. **In wrath remember mercy:** Habakkuk prays knowing well that they don't *deserve* revival, so he prays for **mercy**. The idea is, "LORD, I know that we deserve your **wrath**, but in the midst of your **wrath remember mercy** and send revival among us."

i. "Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!) has done so little for Christ that if 'Ichabod' were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God's house, it would have its deserts. We cannot therefore appeal to merit, it must be mercy."

(Spurgeon)

ii. "O God, have mercy upon thy poor church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength; she has desired

to keep thy word; oh, refresh her; restore to her thy power, and give her yet to be great in this land.”

(Spurgeon)

2. (Hab_3:3-15) The power of God on behalf of His people.

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. *His* brightness was like the light; He had rays *flashing* from His hand, and there His power *was* hidden. Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet. He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways *are* everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian trembled. O LORD, were *You* displeased with the rivers, *was* Your anger against the rivers, *was* Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation? Your bow was made quite ready; oaths were sworn over *Your* arrows. Selah. You divided the earth with rivers. The mountains saw You *and* trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice, *and* lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of Your arrows they went, at the shining of Your glittering spear. You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah. You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret. You walked through the sea with Your horses, through the heap of great waters.

a. **His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise:** As Habakkuk prays for revival he begins to praise the God who brings revival. In this song of praise

(punctuated by several expressions of **Selah**, as in the Psalms) Habakkuk glorifies the power and majesty of God.

i. It is good to praise God like this, and God's people need to do more of it. It is good to praise God because . . .

- Because it gives appropriate honor and glory to God
- Because declares God's specific works
- Because it teaches and reminds us of who God is and what He has done
- Because it places man in proper perspective under God
- Because it builds confidence in the power and works of God

b. **You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed:** As Habakkuk remembers how God has saved in the past, it makes him full of faith for what God can do right now and in the future. He also declares that salvation is brought **with Your Anointed** - and the LORD's anointed is none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

B. The triumph of the prophet's faith.

1. (Hab_3:16-18) Knowing God's strength, Habakkuk can trust the LORD even in a crisis.

When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at *the* voice; rottenness entered my bones; and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, he will invade them with his troops. Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

a. **When I heard, my body trembled:** Habakkuk shows the proper response of man under the sovereign power of God. He recognizes his own weakness and low standing before this God of all majesty and power.

b. **He will invade him with his troops:** The prophet remembers that the Babylonians are coming, and that this

God of sovereign power and majesty is directing their work against Judah.

c. **Though the fig tree may not blossom, not fruit be on the vines . . . yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation:** In almost a vision, Habakkuk sees the Judean countryside desolate, perhaps from the invading Babylonian army or perhaps from natural calamity. In the midst of this almost complete loss, Habakkuk can still **rejoice in the LORD**.

i. He knows that this God of majesty and power is not *diminished* because man faces difficult trials. Sometimes we think, "If God is so great and powerful, how come I am going through a hard time?" Habakkuk knew this was the wrong question and the wrong attitude. Instead, he says: "I know you are strong and mighty, and if we are in desolate circumstances it is because we deserve it. I will praise You still, and even rejoice in You."

ii. **Rejoice in the LORD . . . joy in the God of my salvation:** With desolate circumstances like he just described, Habakkuk can find no joy in the **fig tree** or in the **vines** or in the **fields** or **flock**; yet God is unchanged. He can still **rejoice in the LORD**, because He is unchanging.

iii. Habakkuk didn't just practice positive thinking and shut out the idea of the barren fig tree and the empty cattle stalls. Instead, he saw those problems for what they were and remembered that God was greater than them all.

d. Benjamin Franklin - who was not a Christian, though he had great respect for the Bible - used Hab_3:17-19 to confound a group of sophisticated, cultured despisers of the Bible. When he was in Paris he heard this group mocking the Bible, and mocking Franklin for his admiration of it. One evening he came among them and said that he had a manuscript containing an ancient poem, that he was quite impressed by the poem and he wanted to read it to them. When he read Hab_3:17-19, his listeners received it with praise and admiration - "What a magnificent poem!" they

said, and wanted to know where they could get copies. Franklin told them to just look in Habakkuk chapter 3.

2. (Hab_3:19) Knowing God's strength, Habakkuk can trust God for strength.

The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's *feet*, and He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

a. **The LORD God is my strength:** Habakkuk can only properly pray this after he prayed the prayer of faith in the previous verses. He rightly declared that his strength was *not* in fig trees or vines or fields or flocks, but only in the **LORD God**.

i. We might even say that *what we praise is our strength*. If by his words, life, or heart a man lives to praise his own achievements and resources, that those are his *strength*. If by words, life, or heart one praises a person or an idea, then those are his *strength*. We demonstrate that the **LORD God** is our **strength** when we praise Him.

b. **He will make my feet like deer's feet:** Habakkuk thought of the deer running about on the **high hills**, never losing a step and never falling. More than that, the deer positively dance and leap on the hills - they are full of life and joy. So the prophet declares, "God will set my steps that firmly and lively also. As I trust in Him, He will not allow me to slip or fall, and I will do more than merely plod along - I will skip about with life and joy."

(Hab 3:2) LORD, I have heard the report of what you did;²

I am awed,³ LORD, by what you accomplished.⁴

In our time⁵ repeat those deeds;⁶

in our time reveal them again.⁷

But when you cause turmoil, remember to show us mercy!⁸

(Hab 3:3) God comes⁹ from Teman,¹⁰

the sovereign¹¹ one from Mount Paran.¹² *Selah*.¹³

His splendor covers the skies,¹⁴

his glory¹⁵ fills the earth.

(Hab 3:4) He is as bright as lightning;¹⁶

a two-pronged lightning bolt flashes from his hand.¹⁷

This is the outward display of his power.¹⁸

(Hab 3:5) Plague goes before him;

pestilence¹⁹ marches right behind him.²⁰

(Hab 3:6) He takes his battle position²¹ and shakes²² the earth;

with a mere look he frightens²³ the nations.

The ancient mountains disintegrate;²⁴

the primeval hills are flattened.

He travels on the ancient roads.²⁵

(Hab 3:7) I see the tents of Cushan overwhelmed by trouble;²⁶

the tent curtains of the land of Midian are shaking.²⁷

(Hab 3:8) Is the LORD mad at the rivers?

Are you angry with the rivers?

Are you enraged at the sea?28

Is this why29 you climb into your horse-drawn chariots,30

your victorious chariots?31

(Hab 3:9) Your bow is ready for action;32

you commission your arrows.33 *Selah*.

You cause flash floods on the earth's surface.34

(Hab 3:10) When the mountains see you, they shake.

The torrential downpour sweeps through.35

The great deep36 shouts out;

it lifts its hands high.37

(Hab 3:11) The sun and moon stand still in their courses;38

the flash of your arrows drives them away,39

the bright light of your lightning-quick spear.40

(Hab 3:12) You furiously stomp on the earth,

you angrily trample down the nations.

(Hab 3:13) You march out to deliver your people,

to deliver your special servant.41

You strike the leader of the wicked nation,42

laying him open from the lower body to the neck.43 *Selah*.

(Hab 3:14) You pierce the heads of his warriors44 with a
spear.45

They storm forward to scatter us;46

they shout with joy as if they were plundering the poor with
no opposition.47

(Hab 3:15) But you trample on the sea with your horses,

on the surging, raging waters.48

(Hab 3:16) ***Habakkuk Declares His Confidence***

I listened and my stomach churned;49

the sound made my lips quiver.

My frame went limp, as if my bones were decaying,50

and I shook as I tried to walk.51

I long52 for the day of distress

to come upon53 the people who attack us.

(Hab 3:17) When54 the fig tree does not bud,

and there are no grapes on the vines;

when the olive trees do not produce,55

and the fields yield no crops;56

when the sheep disappear57 from the pen,

and there are no cattle in the stalls,

(Hab 3:18) I will rejoice because of58 the LORD;

I will be happy because of the God who delivers me!
(Hab 3:19) The sovereign LORD is my source of strength.⁵⁹

He gives me the agility of a deer;⁶⁰

he enables me to negotiate the rugged terrain.⁶¹

(This prayer is for the song leader. It is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.)⁶²